

# *The Johnson Letter*

*From the desk of*  
Michigan State Senator

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## **Bi-Partisan Efforts Holds Out-of-State Waste to Michigan Regulations**

Michigan finally has the out-of-state waste restrictions that residents have been calling for under legislation signed into law last week. The package imposes restrictions on the importation of Canadian and out-of-state waste, sets a two-year moratorium on new landfills, and gives broader authority to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to enforce these tougher garbage standards.

The bills provide a comprehensive revision of the state's solid-waste management laws to include additional protections against the disposal of inappropriate waste in Michigan's landfills. The new rules require all Canadian and out-of-state waste to meet the same stringent standards Michigan has for its own waste. Landfills would be required to refuse any out-of-state waste that did not meet the tough standards.

Canadian and out-of-state-waste accounts for approximately 25 percent of all trash entering Michigan's landfills.

### **The bills:**

- Require the state Department of Environmental Quality to provide a statewide inspection program, which would mandate at least four inspections each year of each landfill to ensure compliance. Random inspections also could be conducted to help ensure compliance.
- Require landfills to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan's stringent waste standards, starting Oct. 1, 2004.
- Add two important new landfill bans - beverage containers and whole tires - to further reduce reliance on landfills and encourage recycling.
- Grant the DEQ director emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public's health or safety or to the safety of the environment.
- Add new fines of up to \$25,000 per day for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills.
- Mandate a two-year moratorium on issuing certain new landfill permits.



### **Inside this issue:**

***Canadian Waste Sent Packing***

***Insurance Fee Reversed***

***Organ Donation Event***

***Fallen Officers Fund***

***Legislator of the Year***

***Medicaid Funds in Jeopardy***

### ***'Bad Driver Law' Fixed - Awaiting Governor Approval***

Legislation waiving a \$300 fee for motorists who fail to show proof of insurance when pulled over has been sent to the governor. As amended, the bill allows a driver to appear prior to the appearance date on the citation and show proof that they had auto insurance at the time of the violation. If they do this, no court fines or costs may be levied and the citation will not go on a person's driving record. It also provides for reimbursement of drivers already assessed. The legislation provides drivers with 60 days to appear in court and appeal the court's ruling that resulted in the assessment being charged in the first place. The legislation does not remove the civil infraction for failure to show proof of insurance. This civil infraction has been on the books for years, long before the Driver Responsibility Act. Courts may still assess a \$25 fee for tickets issued, even if a driver appears in court with proof of insurance.

## **Donate Life Capitol Day**

Senator Johnson is pleased to announce that on April 21<sup>st</sup>, Wendy Wagner of Bloomfield Hills will be speaking before the Michigan Senate to share her personal experiences with Gift of Life Michigan and to kick off Michigan Gift of Life Day at the Capitol.

In the month of April, we welcome spring long celebrations to increase awareness of organ and tissue donation during National Donate Life Month. Simultaneously, as springtime brings about nature's renewal, we each have our own ability to renew and enhance life through the gift of organ and tissue donation.

The need for more organ and tissue donors is critical, last year 121 people in Michigan died waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. Over 2,500 Michiganders are waiting for an organ transplant currently.

To learn more about organ donation or to sign up on the Donor Registry, contact Gift of Life Michigan online at [www.giftoflifemichigan.org](http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org) or call (800) 482-4881. Gift of Life Michigan is a full service organ and tissue recovery organization that provides all services necessary for organ, tissue and eye donation.



It is important to note that signing the back of your driver's license is not enough. Since the driver's license is often never located, signing the Donor Registry is the best way to ensure your wish to become a donor is carried out.

## **Johnson Named 2004 Audubon Society Legislator of the Year**

Senator Johnson, was presented Legislator of the Year Award by the Michigan Audubon Society for her unwavering commitment to keeping the mourning dove off the game bird list.

Loretta Gold, President of the MI Audubon Society, expressed her appreciation for Senator Johnson's efforts. She emphasized the Audubon Society's philosophy that they are not an anti-hunting organization, but firmly believe the mourning dove belongs in the songbird category.

"The Audubon Society considers Senator Johnson's practical and unwavering approach to the mourning dove issue in-line with what we have communicated for 100 years," said Gold. "She has assisted in conveying our concerns regarding the mourning dove as a songbird, but more importantly has continued to try and educate the legislature regarding the use of lead shots."

The Michigan Audubon Society advocates the awareness, enjoyment, and stewardship of the environment and natural resources through education, research, conservation/preservation with emphasis on birds and their habitats.

"The Audubon Society has taken a multi-faceted approach to lobbying the Legislature that is based on education," Johnson said. "Therefore, I am truly appreciative of this award."

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Michigan Audubon Society. Their annual awards banquet was held this year in conjunction Michigan State University's Agriculture and Natural Resources Week. For information about the

## **Senate Approves Fallen Officers Benefit Fund**

The Michigan Senate today gave unanimous approval to legislation that creates a fund for survivors of public safety officers killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty. House Bill 4178 creates a state-funded death benefit for public safety officers employed at the state level. The bill provides for a one-time payment of \$25,000 to the spouse, dependents, estate or caregiver of a public safety officer – including law enforcement officers, firefighters, rescue squad members, and ambulance crewmembers – who dies or is permanently disabled in the line of duty. The Senate amended the bill to include local public safety officers and make families of officers killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty on or after Oct. 1, 2003, eligible for benefits. Michigan is one of only a few states without a state-funded death benefit for state-employed public safety officers. The fund would be created within the Department of Treasury and money that remains in the fund would not lapse into the general fund. The bill now returns to the House for concurrence.

## Federal Medicaid Funds In Jeopardy

Legislation introduced to address concerns surrounding the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency was discussed in the Senate Committee on Health Policy Wednesday. The legislation converts the agency to an independent authority and changes the makeup of the board overseeing it. The DWCCMH's failure to fulfill their state Medicaid contract jeopardizes all the federal Medicaid funds received by Michigan. Losing the DWCCMH Medicaid funds alone would total \$500 million.

If the federal waiver is lost, the entire state community mental health system would be bid out and consumers could be at the mercy of the lowest bidder looking to make a profit. Testimony taken at the committee meeting included concerns regarding responsibility, accountability and the make-up of the board. "We fought long and hard for the federal Medicaid waiver which has allowed Michigan to keep its community-based system," said Johnson. "We will not stand idly by while the political infighting in Wayne County jeopardizes the federal waiver and Medicaid dollars."

The DWCCMH, which serves about 75,000 people with mental illnesses and disabilities a year, operates on an annual budget of about \$530 million. More than \$500 million is state and federal Medicaid dollars.

### **MARCH HELPFUL HINTS**

#### **Consumer Resources on the Web**

Food recalls involving products distributed in Michigan are posted at [www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda). Click on Quick Links to Food Recalls.

Energy saving tips and information on home heating help is available at [www.michigan.gov/mpsc](http://www.michigan.gov/mpsc). Click on BE Winterwise.

For help in deciphering monthly telephone charges, access The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) consumer bulletin, Charges on Your Phone Bill, at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/charges.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/charges.html).

To print a copy of Michigan's item pricing "bill of rights" to carry in your wallet, visit [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag). Click on Publications; then click on Other Publications.

Commuters can limit the chance of being stuck in traffic due to road work, by visiting [www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure](http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure).

Citizens can search for lost or forgotten financial assets at [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury). Click on Treasury Quick Links to Unclaimed Property.

Residents of the 13<sup>th</sup> district can obtain a free copy of the Consumer Protection Guide by contacting Senator Johnson toll-free at (877)SEN-13<sup>TH</sup> or by email at [SenSJohnson@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:SenSJohnson@senate.michigan.gov).

Consumers can still sign up for the national Do-Not-Call list by telephone or through the internet. Visit [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or call toll-free 1(888) 382-1222 from the phone you wish to register.

#### **Questions or Comments?**

**Contact Senator Shirley Johnson**

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